

UNISON International Development Fund
Review of 2006



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Foreword

As the first UK union to set up a fund solely to assist sister unions in developing countries to build their capacity and protect their rights, UNISON can be justly proud of the achievements of its International Development Fund in its first full year of operation. We have funded projects to promote workers rights in some of the most dangerous countries of the world to be a trade unionist, such as Colombia, Burma and the Philippines. Our support has helped to strengthen trade unions in Palestine and Iraq operating in extremely difficult circumstances caused by occupation and conflict. The projects we have helped finance have assisted unions in their struggle against HIV/AIDS. And we have worked with partner unions to campaign against the common threats of privatisation and the undermining of public services.

The UIDF was launched in December 2005 as a joint initiative between the Services to Members Committee and the International Committee. It is supported financially by UNISON's affinity partners (companies that provide services to our members) as well as some outside funding. I'd like to take this opportunity to give special thanks to those companies who gave generous donations to the UIDF in 2006, including Frizzell, Thompsons Solicitors and UJA Insurance.

This report is intended to give an overview of the countries and issues where UIDF funding has enabled trade unions to make a difference in 2006. I hope you find inspiration from reading about the real improvements to the lives of workers achieved by trade unions operating under very difficult conditions around the world.

Norma Stephenson
Chair of the UNISON International Development Fund

UNISON International Development Fund (UIDF)

Review of the fund

In the year since its launch in December 2005, the UNISON International Development Fund (UIDF) has provided invaluable practical support to many unions and organisations promoting workers' rights in poorer countries. The UIDF is widely supported by UNISON's affinity partners (companies that provide services to UNISON members), the National Executive Committee and the membership.

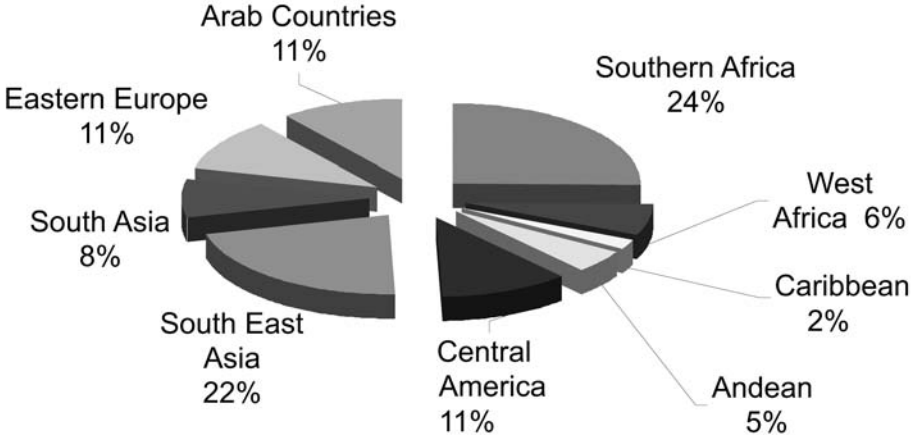
Health workers in the Philippines participating in trade union training funded by UIDF
© PSLINK.



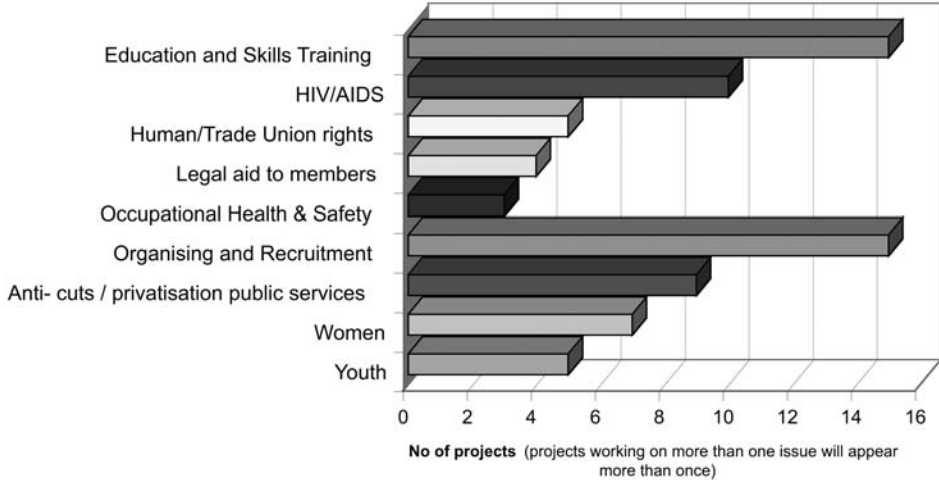
To date the fund has allocated almost £600,000 to support 39 projects in 30 countries around the world. These projects are aimed at enabling trade unions and workers' organisations to promote the interests of workers, especially public sector workers. Many projects involve defending basic workers' rights and the right to organise independent trade unions, free from

government harassment and repression. The fund has supported trade unions and organisations in countries such as Bosnia, Palestine, Nepal and Iraq, where there are ongoing conflicts or post-conflict situations, and in countries like Zimbabwe where unions are threatened by political and economic instability. UIDF projects also have a strong focus on fighting HIV/AIDS, especially in Africa, and on strengthening public services and opposing cuts and privatisation. Other issues addressed by the projects include: improving health and safety standards in Vietnamese factories and South African hospitals; developing a radio network to address labour issues in 10 southern Africa countries; and giving legal aid to workers facing discrimination and other labour rights violations in Serbia and Palestine.

Where we fund projects



Issues covered by UIDF projects



Project reports by priority areas

The last 12 months have been a very productive period for the fund and have resulted in some significant achievements for many of the projects funded. Some of the projects have now been completed; others are just beginning. A full list of all the projects funded to date can be found at the end of this chapter. The following is an outline of some of the achievements of UIDF projects in 2006.

Awareness and prevention of HIV/AIDS

It is important to support public sector unions in their struggle against HIV/AIDS not only because they are uniquely placed to educate workers, fight discrimination and win support for those affected by the virus, but also because strong health and local government services are key tools in the struggle against the pandemic.

The Malawi Municipal Workers Union (MAMWU), the Civil Servants Trade Unions of Malawi and the Zambia United Local Authorities Workers' Unions are three unions that have used UIDF support to develop ways of more effectively addressing HIV/AIDS. They have started to include HIV/AIDS issues in their collective bargaining and health and safety negotiations. In both countries many public service workers lack information about HIV/AIDS. These projects have raised awareness among union members and encouraged more open discussion about sensitive social practices. The use of condoms is also being widely accepted as a form of prevention against contracting HIV/AIDS.

“As a person suffering from HIV, I wanted to join the project so I can help educate colleagues not to be afraid of the illness and to ensure prevention through abstention as well as by using condoms.”

MAMWU member

In Malawi, members have become aware that there is a government policy that 2% of the country's budget should be allocated to support people affected by HIV/AIDS. This has given members the confidence to seek support and treatment where necessary.

Trade unions' work on HIV/AIDS has also increased members' awareness of the importance of joining trade unions and becoming more active participants in the work of their union. In addition to funding initiatives to fight HIV/AIDS in individual unions, UNISON is funding a southern African HIV/AIDS coordinator, in collaboration with PSI, who is helping unions to share their experiences and develop their capacity in this area. We are also working with public service unions in Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Mozambique and Zimbabwe to develop new HIV/AIDS projects.

Protecting workers' rights against repression and political killings

The fund has helped trade unions get justice for their members in countries where being a trade unionist can be very dangerous.

In Colombia, the fund supported a project with ICTUR (International Centre for Trade Unions Rights) in partnership with CAJAR, a lawyers' collective based in Colombia which has been providing legal support to trade unionists who have been subjected to trade union and human rights violations. They have filed several cases at the Inter American Court to seek justice and reparation for trade union rights violations which occur with impunity. Recently they won a protective order from the Inter American Court which ordered the Colombian government to give protection to a member of the health union, ANTHOC, and conduct an investigation to prosecute those making threats against the worker.

In the Philippines extra-judicial killings have escalated alarmingly in the last few years. The UIDF funded an international labour solidarity mission to investigate the killings of trade unionists and trade union supporters. Since 2001 more than 770 people have been assassinated and hundreds have disappeared or been arrested and tortured by the military. None of the killers has been brought to justice. The findings from the mission have increased awareness about this situation in the UK and abroad. Since the mission several unions, NGOs and labour federations in the UK and abroad have expressed their concern to the President of the Philippines Gloria Arroyo and supported the Philippine unions' campaign to stop the killings.

Organising and raising awareness of workers

Organising and education work is sometimes taken for granted by many workers in Europe and in other western countries. However, many developing countries have just started to organise or have resumed organising unions again after they have been long interrupted by civil wars or struggles for independence. This is core trade union work for which many unions need support to get started and build up momentum.

In Cambodia, some 4,793 new union members have been recruited and 300



Members of the El Salvador water union SETA show death threat received during their campaign against water privatisation. © SETA

“As health workers we have been educated to serve others and to ensure that the right of others to quality health care is recognized. But how about our rights to decent working conditions and to living wages? No one else can take up this fight other than us.”

PSLINK member speaking at a seminar funded by UIDF

existing members, which include 217 women, trained in basic trade unionism as a result of the organising and education project implemented by the Free Trade Union of Cambodia. This tremendous achievement was made possible by UIDF funding.



Diamond miners in Sierra Leone: A UNISON and TUC Northern region project is providing training in organising and recruitment to the Sierra Leone Mineworkers Union.

Projects in Malawi, Georgia, Nicaragua, Sierra Leone and India have focused on recruiting women and young members both as a way of strengthening trade unions for the future and ensuring they are more representative of working people. Following a seminar on women's empowerment organised by BAKSAP, a Bangladeshi public service trade union, the union agreed to require that the central executive committee be made up of at least 30% women. Meanwhile UNISON support of a project in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which involved developing the women's section of the trade union confederation, has translated into real benefits for working women. Thanks to the women's section campaign the newly signed General Collective Agreement requires employers to cover the cost of a

medical check up for all working women.

Strengthening of public services and posing alternatives to privatisation

Effective water and health services are vital in the fight against poverty in developing countries. With the help of the UIDF, trade unions and workers' organisations have successfully opposed plans to cut or privatise these services. They have also been able to engage in public debate about how these services should be maintained and strengthened to ensure the poorest have access.

The Malawian Water union, WETUM, has successfully campaigned against privatisation of the water industry and to date it remains within the public sector. In Georgia, the project to campaign against water privatisation has

succeeded in getting the commitment of the government not to privatise the Tbilisi Water Utility. The government has accepted many of the union's arguments against privatisation and is exploring alternative ways of rehabilitating the utility. The project has also helped to recruit 280 new union members in the Adjara region.

“As water workers, we cherish the right of all Salvadorans to a clean, abundant water supply. We will continue to struggle with other unionists, students and people of faith to defend that right.”

General Secretary of SETA, El Salvadorian Water Union

SETA, the El Salvadorian water union, has used UIDF funding to develop a coalition of labour, religious and social organisations. This coalition has been instrumental in educating hundreds of people about the politics of water through TV, radio and public meetings to influence parliament and wider public opinion on the issue of keeping water services within the public control.

A project in Egypt organised by the Centre for Trade Union and Workers' Services worked to oppose a draft law which would have increased user fees by one third, putting decent health care out of reach of many of the countries' poorest people. The project's education and campaign work contributed to the proposed law being withdrawn and raised awareness among workers about the need for a public health system based on universal access.

Water and health services are two of the most important public services for people in poorer countries. With the help of the UIDF, trade unions and workers' organisations were able to engage in these important debates and to inform the wider population of the importance of influencing policy decisions that affect the quality of people's lives.



Illustrated primer on the effects of privatisation and national debt on the Philippines health system supported by UIDF © AVHRC

Projects funded by UIDF

Africa

Botswana

National Amalgamated Local and Central government and Parastatal Manual Workers Unions

HIV/AIDS prevention, care and support

Malawi

Malawi Municipal Workers Union

Fight against HIV/AIDS among workers

Water Employees Trade Union of Malawi

Anti-privatisation of water campaign, women empowerment and organising northern region water board

Civil Servants Trade Union (CSTU)

HIV/AIDS and Occupational Health and Safety

Nigeria

Medical and Health Workers Union of Nigeria

HIV/AIDS: Campaigning against stigmatisation and discrimination

Sierra Leone

UNISON + TUC Northern Region

Building union capacity in Sierra Leone

South Africa

Hospital Personnel Trade Union of South Africa (HOSPERSA)

Campaign for increased prevention and compensation for workplace exposure to HIV

Workers World Media Productions

Development of African Labour radio network

Southern Africa

UNISON / Public Services International

Coordinating trade union responses to HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa

Zambia

Zambia United Local Authorities Workers Union

HIV/AIDS project

Zimbabwe

Civil Service Employees Association (Zimbabwe) CSEA

HIV/AIDS Policy project

Americas

Colombia

Justice for Colombia/National Association of Clinical Workers of Colombia	Building the human rights capacity of National Association of Clinical Workers of Colombia
International Centre for Trade Union Rights	Trade union rights unit

El Salvador

Sindicato de Empresa de Trabajadores de ANDA (ANDA Workers Labour Union)	Sensitisation and training against water privatisation
War on Want	Challenging labour flexibilisation in El Salvador

Guyana

Guyana Public Services Union	Increasing union's effectiveness through organising of women and young workers
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Nicaragua

Confederacion General Union Nacional de Empleados (UNE)	Increasing involvement of young workers in the union
Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign Action Group	Linking young trade unionists

Asia

Bangladesh

Bangladesh Federation of Public Workers Employees Unions (BAKSAP)	Empowerment of women and winning trade union rights for public employees
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Burma

Federation of Trade Unions (FTUB)	Capacity building in Burma where trade unions are under severe threat
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Cambodia

One World Action / Free Trade Union of Cambodia	Challenging exploitation in textile factories.
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India

DTC (Delhi Transport Corporation)
Employees Congress

Campaign to retain public transport systems and ensure a quality affordable service

National Organisation of Government Employees (India)

Building capacity of public sector unions

Indonesia

Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA

Strengthening the training network for independent, democratic unions

Nepal

Nepal Inter-Corporation Employees Union

Defeating plans to privatise water and electricity utilities

Philippines

Amado V. Hernandez Resource Centre

Producing an illustrated primer on the effects of debt and privatisation on public health sector workers

Ecumenical Institute for Labor Education and Research (EILER)

Campaign to stop the killings of trade unionists and union supporters

Public Services Labour Independent Confederation (PSLINK)

Organising the health sector through social dialogue

Sri Lanka

Podu Sevaka Sangamaya,
National Supply and Drainage Board,
Sri Lanka

Opposing privatisation of water

Vietnam

Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA

Improving health and safety in private enterprises

Europe**Bosnia-Herzegovina**

International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)

Building up of the joint confederation of Trade Unions

Georgia

Public services and local government trade union

Opposing privatisation of utilities and strengthening social partnership in the public sector

Macedonia

SUTKOZ - Catering, tourism, handicraft and disabled trade union

Adapting to the transformation of communal enterprises into private enterprises

Serbia

Partners:

Trade Union Confederation "Nezavisnost"

Project:

Strengthening Centres for Workers' Rights and integrating them into the legal structures of the union

Middle East/Arab States

Egypt

Christian Aid

Raising awareness about the impact of International Financial Institutions and WTO agreements on workers, the poor and marginalised

Jordan and Morocco

International Federation of Workers Education Associations (IFWEA)

Increasing the capacity of trade unions to address HIV and protect migrant workers

Palestine / Israel

Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions – Public Service Union (PGFTU)

Securing legal and financial rights of Palestinian workers inside Israel



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